

CHRIST THE CAUSE OF DIVISION

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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“So there was a division among the people because of him.”
John 7:43

IT seems, then, that even when Christ was the preacher, there was a division among the hearers, so we must not be surprised if the same result follows from our preaching. No doubt, strife has sometimes been caused by a preacher's harshness of expression or unwise utterances. He may have spoken unadvisedly or provokingly, but if he did not, all would not be pleased, for even when Jesus spake as never man spake, all His hearers were not pleased. We truly say, “Many men, many minds” and therefore, even when Christ spoke, “there was a division among the people because of him.”

Nor was the division to be traced to the subject upon which Jesus was speaking at that time. There are some deep, mysterious subjects which seem calculated to stir up controversy, and you might say, “Whoever shall speak upon such a topic, even if the wise Solomon were to speak, he must create a division in any audience, if that should be his theme.”

But in this case, with Christ for a speaker, the subject was Himself. It was concerning Him that the *schisma*—the schism occurred. There was a schism among the people, not concerning predestination or free will—not concerning forms of church government—not concerning the modes of observing the ordinances, but “*because of him.*”

So, then, we may not expect unanimity among mankind, whoever shall be the speaker or whatever may be the subject of address. And I am not quite sure that this is a result that is altogether to be regretted. I have heard of a whole parish in which there were no religious bickering because there was no religion. There were no religious strifes, because nobody had anything worth striving for. And that is not a state of things over which I can rejoice.

I dread the peace of the sepulchre far more than the battles of life. Life naturally makes a stir—it seems inevitable that it should do so—and it is better that men should think, even though they think amiss, than that they should not think at all. I am not aware that the cattle in the fields have any diversity of judgment—it is no cause for wonder that there should be agreement where mind is absent.

But it seems all but inevitable that, where there is mind, where there is thought, where weighty subjects are considered and discussed, there should be differences of opinion. And it is better that there should be those differences than that there should be the apathy, the indifference, the torpor of death.

And yet, my brethren, I am sorry that there should be any division among the people about the Lord Jesus Christ, because if there is a point in which all mankind ought to have been agreed, it is concerning Him who came to save men—the unselfish One who laid aside His robes of glory that He might take upon Himself our nature, our suffering, and our sin, so that He might redeem us from all our iniquities.

There ought to have been only one opinion upon this subject—“This is the Son of God. Let us adore Him. This is the Christ of God. Let us trust Him. This is our God. We have waited for Him—let us rejoice and be glad in Him.” But it was not so—“There was a division among the people because of him.” And to this day, the greatest division in the world is “*because of him.*”

I. I ask you to notice, first, that THERE WAS A DIVISION AMONG NON-BELIEVERS CONCERNING CHRIST.

A large proportion of those who listened to Christ did not accept Him as their Savior and although they all agreed upon that point, there was a division among them concerning Him.

First, *there were some who rejected His claims altogether*, and who even said, “He deceiveth the people.” They went so far as to wish to lay violent hands upon Him and more than once we read that they took up stones to stone Him. And we know that they did at last compass His death. In like manner, even to this day, there are some who utterly reject the claims of Jesus Christ. They seem as if they could not say anything too bitter and cruel concerning Him. They will not have Him to reign over them—in downright, terrible earnest, they reject Him.

But all disbelievers are not so extreme in their opposition to Christ. We noticed, in reading the chapter, *that there are some who admit a portion of Christ’s claims*. Some said, “He is a good man.” Many said, “Of a truth, this is the Prophet”—the promised Messiah. They would not shut their eyes—they were too candid to do so—to the goodness of His personal character and to a certain grandeur about Him which betokened that He was a prophet sent from God. They went as far as that, but they would go no further. And there are many in the present day who act in the same fashion.

There was a third class of persons who went still further. *They admitted Christ’s claims, but neglected to follow out the legitimate consequences of them*. They said, “When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?” Others said, “This is the Christ.” They were quite certain that He was the Messiah, and yet, when they had said that, they coolly went their way and took no more notice of Him.

They had made a truthful statement, but it did not in the least affect their conduct. Though they believed Jesus to be anointed of God, they did not enroll themselves beneath His banner, or become obedient to His commands, or ask to be instructed in His doctrine. And alas! we have a good many persons of that sort still in our midst.

I suppose that most of the unconverted people here now are persons of that character. You do not deny the Scriptures—you believe in them. You do not doubt the deity of Christ—you believe it. You do not question His atonement—you believe it. Some of you would not like to hear anything contrary to the doctrine which has been taught to you concerning Him. If anyone were to preach error, you would at once say, “This is not the Gospel, but another gospel, and we will not listen to it.” Yet you have never accepted Christ to be your very own Savior. You have never committed yourselves to His dear keeping. You have orthodox heads, but heterodox hearts.

It is still true, as it was in our Lord’s day, that there is a division among the people because of him. And I ask you, who love the Savior, as you look upon those who do not love Him, to make a distinction between the one and the other of them. As for those who utterly reject Him, pray for them. Do not expect them to love you if they do not love your Lord. And when they speak harshly concerning you, do not be astonished, for Jesus said to His disciples, “The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”

Do not get angry with them because they do not receive the Savior, but pray for them, pity them, and love them with a love that will not give them up. Remember that the greatest force in the world is love—it is invincible. You can love a man to Christ, but you cannot bully him into salvation. I never heard of a soul that was scolded to the Savior, but I have known many drawn to Him by love. So love them, dear friends—keep on loving them more and more, until they shall be brought to feel that the love of God shed abroad in your heart has reached their hearts also.

As for those who are prepared to go part of the way with Christ, aid them all you can. If they have not all the light you could wish them to have, be thankful that they have any, and tell them that no man, who acts honestly up to the light he has, will be left in the dark. If a man has a dozen errors beclouding the truth which he sincerely believes, if he is only a true man, he will come out right.

I have often conversed with persons who have been as wrong as wrong can be, but they did not mean to be wrong. They had an earnest desire to know the truth if they could find it, and they had an earnest wish to live that truth, too. I am always hopeful about such persons. You remember that our Lord Jesus

said, concerning His Father, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” It is the same now—if anyone is desirous to act according to the mind of God, light will come to him sooner or later, and he shall discover the true doctrine of Christ. Try and help him discover it. Quietly, lovingly, point him to the Son of God, and rest not content till he finds his Savior.

As for those who believe everything about Christ, but yet do not savingly rely upon Christ Himself, O my friends, what shall we say concerning these people? We have brought them to the water of life, but we cannot make them drink. We put the bread of life before them, but we cannot make them eat it. It behooves us to weep in secret concerning our fellow seat holders and those who come here constantly, or who go to other places of worship where Christ is preached, and who say of what they hear, “It is all true,” yet they do not receive it in their hearts.

O my hearer, out of your own mouth you will be condemned at the last, because you will not be able to say, “I did not know the way of salvation,” for you do know it. You will not be able to say, “I did not accept the Bible as true,” for you know it is true, and yet you do not take the practical step that ought to follow as the result of that knowledge. May the Lord, in His infinite mercy, lead you to take it this very hour! If you do not take it, you will be convicted—self-convicted at the bar of God. I must not spend more time, however, on this part of the subject—but you can all see that there was a division among the unbelievers concerning Christ.

II. But now, secondly, THERE WAS ALSO A DIVISION OF BELIEVERS FROM NON-BELIEVERS.

There were some who did really and savingly take Christ to be theirs, and “there was a division among the people” on that account, and what a division that always is! How deep it is! How wide it is! Between the poorest saint and the brightest moralist, there is a great gulf. We may not be able to perceive it in the outward character, but there is as deep a gulf as there is between the feeblest form of life and death—a gulf which only omnipotent grace can cause any man to pass over. The radical difference between the true believer and the unbeliever lies in their relation to Christ. That is the point of divergence—“There was a division among the people because of him.”

For, first, *to the unbeliever, Christ is nothing, but to the believer, Christ is everything.* To the unbeliever, a mere opinion about Christ is everything. To the true believer, the saving knowledge of Christ has covered up all mere opinions concerning Him. He knows Christ, and lives in Him, and Christ also lives in him.

Look at the difference between the believer and the unbeliever *in the matter of trusting Christ.* The non-believer trusts in himself, or in his own works, or in his priest if he is a Romanist or Ritualist. But the true Christian trusts in Christ wholly and alone.

There is one thing concerning myself about which I am perfectly sure. When I pass myself through many forms of self-examination, I tremble as I do it, lest I should deceive myself. But about this one matter I know that I am not deceived—I have not the shadow of a shade of a ghost of a confidence as to my ultimate salvation except in Jesus Christ alone.

And one reason why I dare not have any confidence except in Him is that I do not know anything I ever did, or ever thought, or ever was, in which I could confide—so I am driven to trust in Him and in Him alone. I lie at the foot of His cross because I cannot stand upright. I must do that, for, like Luther, I can do no other.

If I search myself and my whole life over and over again, I cannot see anything but what I call a filthy rag, and I fling it all away—good works and bad works—so far as mine are concerned, are not worth the trouble of sorting out. So I tie them all up in one bundle and pitch them overboard, and just cling to the ever-blessed lifebuoy of the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. That is what a believer does—he trusts Christ, and the unbeliever does not—and that difference between them makes a division among the people.

The same difference is apparent in the matter of *love to Christ*. The true believer loves his Lord. He is no fiction to us—no mere historic personage about whom we read, but of whom we think little or nothing. We love Him. The very sound of His name has music in it to us. Some seek their pleasure in the world, but the Christian does not. If he is obliged to go into the world, he is glad to get out of it as quickly as possible. While he is with worldlings, he says, “There is nothing here to suit me.” But let him have his Master’s company for half an hour alone, no matter where, and he says, “This is to me a foretaste of the bliss of heaven.”

Rest assured, dear friends, that where your pleasure is, there your heart is. If you find your pleasure in the world, your heart is in the world and you are to be reckoned among the worldly. But if Christ is your joy, your pleasure, your delight, your very heaven—then there is a difference between you and worldlings.

Further, those who know Christ and trust Him, and love Him, *differ in character from worldlings*, for those who truly know Christ seek to be like Him. They take Him to be their copy, and try to imitate every line, each down-stroke and up-stroke. But he who knows not Christ takes any model that he pleases and aims not at copying the excellence of Jesus, and thus again there is “a division among the people because of him.”

This division is also shown *in the gradual development of different characters*. You may be at a railway station—an important junction, it may be—there are two lines of rails that run parallel to each other. There is a point, a little distance off, where they begin to diverge, one going to the East, and the other to the West. They will be many miles apart before long, but at first, how slight is the division!

So is it with those who begin life side by side. Two young men may be very much alike and for years you may scarcely see any difference between them. But after a while, the ungodly man develops in his ways, and the lover of Christ develops in his way. You see them when they have reached middle life. You see them, perhaps, on their dying bed—at what a vast distance they are from one another!

What a difference there is between them with respect to Christ! One knows Him as his Savior and All-in-all. The other knows nothing of Him. One rejoices in Him—the other despises Him. One is triumphing in the thought that he will wake up in his Lord’s likeness. The other lies down to die moaning that he is “without hope.” In such cases, there is truly a difference among the people because of Christ.

But what a difference there will be among the people *in their eternal destiny*! By and by they will awake and arise. The judgment seat will be occupied and Christ the Judge will sit upon His throne. He is the man upon whom wicked men once spat, but His countenance shall be bright as the sun in that day. He is the man whom they scourged—but then He will sway the sceptre of universal sovereignty and the unnumbered myriads of our race will all stand before Him.

What an assembly that will be when before Him are gathered all nations! They will crowd the land and throng the very mountain tops—and stand upon the ocean as upon a sea of glass. What a multitude! But there will be one thing that will divide them and that will be “a division among the people because of him.”

Do you hear the songs and shouts of the ransomed? Louder than ten thousand thunders, do you hear them? They are clapping their hands. They are shouting, “Welcome, welcome, Son of God!” The archangel’s trumpet seems to them, as they wake up from the dead, to be the morning summons that calls them up from beds of dust and silent clay to joy and eternal peace. And every note, as it peals out is one to which they can sing, and they chant in harmony with it the great anthem, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

But what other sounds do I hear amidst those thunders of applause and that mighty chorus of the redeemed? Hark! sharp and shrill, there come up cries that pierce the very firmament—terrible sounds that even the glad music of that grand morning hymn cannot wholly drown. I can hear it, though the archangel’s trumpet waxes exceedingly loud and long, for myriads of lost souls have risen from the

tomb, and they are wailing, wailing, wailing, “*because of him*” whom they rejected. And above all other sounds there comes up the awful cry to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”

There will indeed be a division among the people because of him in that tremendous day. On which side of the King will you be, then, my dear hearer? I pray you to answer that question in the quietude of your chamber this very night. Where will you be when Christ shall make the final division between all the vast masses of the human race, “And he shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats”?

Will you be driven to the left hand, among the goats, with the King’s curse thundering in your ear? Or will you be gathered with those upon His right hand, and join with them in singing the hymns of angels and of men redeemed, to whom Christ will say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”?

III. I cannot give more time to that solemn theme, for I must close my discourse with a brief reference to one other topic which arises out of the text. We have considered the division among the unbelievers “because of him,” and the division between believers and unbelievers. Now, in the last place, I want to show you that, WHEN FAITH COMES, UNITY IS PRODUCED.

Is there any division among believers because of Christ? Is there “a division among the people”—the people of the Lord—because of him? No, beloved. Christ is the cause of the greatest division, but He is also the medium of the greatest union. No force in the world splits as does Christ’s battle-axe. He Himself said, “I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.”

And it is a wonder how families have been divided, and how communities and even nations have been divided by the coming of Christ. Those who loved and served Him would follow Him at all costs, and those who would not have Him rejected Him with the utmost fury. There are some people in this world who are like the chip in the porridge—there is no flavor in them, they are of little or no account—but my Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, is not one of that sort.

You must either love Him or hate Him. You must give a verdict for Him or against Him. You cannot be indifferent. He Himself puts the matter thus—“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” You are, at this moment, either Christ’s friend or His foe. You cannot be neutral.

Yet, while Christ is the great cause of division, it is also true that He is the great means of union. There is nothing that welds men together as the love of Christ does—it is the most potent force in the universe for gathering together those who are scattered abroad, and making them truly one. *In Christ, nationalities are blended.*

Think of the division between the Jew and the Gentile—what can make them one, but Christ? He breaks down the middle wall of partition, and unites them. Look at Peter, that stiff, unbending Jew. He never ate of an unclean animal and he never means to do so. He is on the top of the house, praying at noonday, and is very hungry. He hears the command, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” And there is let down before him a great sheet full of all manner of strange creatures.

But Peter has never touched anything of the kind. He does not like such fare, but by and by, he learns the meaning of the vision. There were certain Gentiles on the way to him and he was to go with them, and to preach Christ to all who were assembled in the house of Cornelius. And he must eat and drink with the uncircumcised. And taught of the Spirit, Peter does it, and Paul does it.

Never, I pray you, speak disrespectfully of a Jew. The greatest man who ever lived was a Jew. Christ our Lord was Himself of the house of David, of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham. Glory be to God, the Jews shall be brought in with the Gentiles, but they are the old original branches of the good olive tree, and they shall be grafted in again. It is unbelief that has caused them to be cast out—but I am

sure that every man who truly loves Christ, feels that to him there is neither Jew nor Gentile now—that feud is ended once for all, for all believers are one in Christ.

So, too, wherever Christ comes, there are no foreigners. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” Tell me that a man is a Christian—I do not care to what nationality he belongs—he may be a Dutchman, he may come from Zululand, he may be an Afghan, he may be a Hindu—it does not matter what he is, as long as he loves Christ.

What more do I want than that? He is my brother, whatever is the color of his skin. He is near akin to me if he is akin to Christ—and all genuine Christians feel that it is so. May there be more and more of this fellow feeling among believers, for Christ Jesus our Lord has no division among His people as to blacks and whites, race and caste—that is ended once for all.

And truly, wherever Christ is known in His saving power, there is a wonderful uniting force among all genuine Christians. Look at Pentecost—“All that believed were together, and had all things common.” They loved each other so much that if one was poor, his rich brothers helped him. They felt as if they were all fused into one body by the intense heat of love to Christ.

And there are many, many, many similar cases now (I speak what I do know), in which believers have received help and succor which they never would have had if it had not been for the name and love of Christ. Many of you here know that there is much true Christian love in the world—and you could speak of it if it were the time to do so—but these things are not to be blazed abroad.

In Christ, *personal peculiarities cease to divide*. We do love each other—let us love one another more and more, “for love is of God and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.” Did you ever notice how true Christian workers love each other? When there is little doing for Christ, a man tries to get all the fish he can into his own net. He says, “We must get the people inside our chapel—try and make Baptists of them, or Wesleyans.” But if ever the Spirit of God comes with mighty power, they begin to beckon to their neighbors, who are in the other ship, to come and help them because their boat will not hold all the fish. And they forget all their little differences in the one grand point of unity, for all are agreed about Christ.

Notice what happens in a real, earnest prayer meeting. Christians do not agree about everything. Perhaps we never shall. Possibly it is well that we never should, or else we might make a great big church and have a pope over it, and do nobody knows how much harm. We are sometimes best apart. Some people love one another all the better because they do not all live in the same house.

Sometimes it is a cause of disagreement when two or three sets of husbands and wives, who are related to each other, come to live under the same roof. But you get together a number of people who love Christ and set them praying. What was that brother who prayed just now? He was a Wesleyan. How do you know that? Why, because he prayed a Calvinistic prayer!

Who was that last brother that prayed? He was a Strict Baptist. How do you know that? Why, because he prayed a prayer that was full of generosity and Christian love! Here is another—who is he? He is an Independent, I should say. How do I know that? Why, because his prayer was so full of dependence on Christ, and trust in Him.

We can sometimes even fight with one another for what we believe to be the truth and rebuke each other to the face if we think there is an error—but when it comes to Christ and His dear cross, give me your hand, brother. You are washed in the blood, and so am I. You are resting in Christ, and so am I. You have put all your hope in Jesus, and that is where all my hope is, and therefore we are one. Yes, there is no real division among the true people of God because of Christ.

Let us try, moreover, to make the world see that it is so by everyone endeavoring to magnify Jesus more than his neighbor does. Let there be no strife, except to see who can deny himself most for Jesus, which can labor most for Jesus, who can lift the grace of Jesus higher than others.

And oh! *what unity there will be in heaven*, where Christ will be the center of the redeemed, where all shall sing of Him, and where all shall equally behold Him! All of us who believe in Jesus will be with Him where He is, and so we shall behold His glory, the glory which His Father gave Him.

Certain brethren think that they will have a place all to themselves. Well, they have not been very amiable down here and therefore I should not be sorry if they were going to have a place to themselves. But at the same time, I pray the Lord to have mercy upon them and to enable them to give up all idea of having a place for themselves, and all thought of having anything different from the rest of the Lord's family, for I do believe that there will be no division among the people of God because of Christ, or concerning the glory that Christ will give them. But they shall all forevermore behold Him and forevermore call Him theirs, and rejoice in Him world without end.

I am quite satisfied to share the lot of the poorest of His people. And if there is a saint in heaven who has to sit by the door, I will sit with him forever. And if I shall have a right—as I am sure I shall not—to a higher and a better place than he has, I will ask my Master to let me sit among the lowliest of His servants, and I am sure that you, brethren and sisters, will add, “And so say all of us.” Let others say what they like, I feel certain that there will be no division among the people of God in heaven because of Christ—to whom be praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 7:14-53

Verse 14. *Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.*

He was no coward, so He boldly showed Himself in the midst of the throng in the temple.

15. *And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?*

Or “How knoweth he the Scriptures? How has He come to be an instructed man, having never learned of the Rabbis? He has never passed through our schools of learning, so what can He know?”

16. *Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.*

“I am not the inventor of what I say. I am but a messenger, delivering the message of Him that sent Me.”

17. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

Any man who is seeking after that which is right, and laboring to do that which is right, is a good judge of the truth. A practical life of godliness makes a man a far better critic as to what truth is than all the learning of the schools can do.

18. *He that speaketh of himself seeks his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.*

If you ever hear a man speaking about the priesthood, meaning himself and his brethren, and about the church, again meaning himself and his brethren—and about the sacraments, meaning certain performances by himself and his brethren—you may know at once that God did not send him. But he who speaks to the glory of God, and does not say, “Behold me,” but “Behold the Lamb of God,” he it is whom God has sent.

19. *Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?*

“Did not Moses say, ‘Thou shalt not kill’? Then, you do not keep his law, though you profess such reverence for him, for, if you did, you would not go about to kill Me.”

20-21. *The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee? Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.*

“I did it on the Sabbath day and you are all stumbling at that.”

22-23. *Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?*

Surely, there was never a more triumphant answer than that.

24-25. *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?*

Perhaps some of the same people who had asked Christ, “Who goeth about to kill thee?” now inquired, “Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?”

26-27. *But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.*

They had a notion—perhaps derived from that passage in Isaiah, “who shall declare his generation?”—that the birth of Christ would be hidden in mystery. At any rate, there was some cloudy idea floating about that it would be concealed.

28. *Then cried Jesus in the temple as He taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know from whence I am:*

“And yet you do not know me.”

28-30. *And I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me. Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.*

Something seemed to hold them back. Enraged as they were against Him, a mysterious and mighty awe was upon them, so that they dared not touch Him.

31-33. *And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done? The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. Then said Jesus unto them,*

As they came to take Him—perhaps to the very officers sent by the Pharisees, Jesus said,—

33. *Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.*

“You may well let me alone now, for it will only be a little while, and then I shall be delivered into your hands, and you will no more be troubled with Me.”

34-35. *Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?*

That was always their fear. “Is He going to the Greeks? Will He be a teacher to them? Will He try to introduce them into the mysteries of our faith?”

36-37. *What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come? In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried,*

I think I see Him standing up in the midst of the great throng. That congregation would soon be scattered, never to come together again, so He stood up in the most prominent place He could find, and notwithstanding all their anger, and their desire to kill Him, He cried—

37-38. *Saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly—*

Or “out of the very midst of him”

38. *Shall flow rivers of living water.*

What a glorious Gospel sermon that was! It comes to us down through the ages, and is as true now as when Jesus spoke it. Ho, thirsty ones, come ye to Him, and drink. And He will slake your thirst, and create in you a well of living water which shall bubble up forever and ever.

39-40. *(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.*

The prophet about whom Moses spoke.

41. *Others said, This is the Christ.*

The Messiah.

41-42. *But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?*

This was blessed testimony even out of the mouth of Christ's enemies. They objected against Christ what was indeed the fact, for He did come of the seed of David, and from the town of Bethlehem. There He was born and though they called Him the Nazarene—and He refused not the title—though over His head Pilate wrote, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," yet is He the Son of David and His birthplace was at Bethlehem, though some of them knew it not.

43-44. *So there was a division among the people because of him. And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.*

He was immortal till His work was done. The hour for His death had not yet struck and He must live on till the appointed time.

45-46. *Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.*

The charm of His eloquence, the dignity of His person, His awe-inspiring demeanor, and a singular something—they knew not what—that Divinity that does hedges about such a King as He was—restrained their hands. They said, "Never man spake like this man."

47. *Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?*

"You sheriffs' officers are generally hard-hearted enough—are you also deceived?"

48. *Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?*

This was as much as to say, "If we have not believed on Him—we who are the great dons of the nation—the rulers and the Pharisees—why, then, there cannot be anything in His claims. Just as some people seem to think that unless there is a lord in a Society, unless there is an honorable somebody or other in the chair, there is nothing in it.

49. *But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.*

They regarded the poor, common people as ignorant and accursed, whereas they, probably, knew as much about the law and the real spirit of it as these learned teachers did.

50. *Nicodemus said unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)*

Being a member of the council,—

51. *Does our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?*

He only asked a question, that was all, and timid Christian, if you are placed where you cannot say much for Christ—if you have too great a fear upon you to vindicate your Master at any considerable length—yet say what you can. And perhaps, the simple asking of a question may suffice to defend Him. Nicodemus did but rise and ask, "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?"

52. *They answered and said unto him, Are thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.*

Which was a lie, for prophets had come out of Galilee. Still, they denied it and they were indignant at having such a question put to them by Nicodemus.

53. *And every man went unto his own house.*

It was like a bombshell exploding in the midst of them. And often, a few brave words dropped into the midst of an assembly of bad men will explode among them, and scatter them hither and thither. Nicodemus had accomplished what, perhaps, he thought he would never do. He was indeed like his name, on that occasion—one of the conquering people—for "every man went unto his own house."

Nicodemus had scattered them all by his startling question. May each of us witness as bravely for Christ as we have opportunity!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—427, 804, 388

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